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PARIS FOR BOB KANEDA
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SUBJECT: TOGO: CONSULAR FRAUD SUMMARY

¶1. SUMMARY: The following is an update of Togo's Consular Fraud Summary for the period of October 2008 to March 2009. END SUMMARY.

¶2. COUNTRY CONDITIONS: Foreign countries continue to show interest in helping Togo emerge from its prolonged economic crisis. Massive flooding in July and August 2008 caused considerable damage to Togo's infrastructure including the destruction of several key bridges and roads. Combined with a rise in food prices, this had a negative impact on Togo's economy. Currently, over 60% of the population lives below the poverty line.

¶3. High Cost of Living: Following the universal decrease in crude oil prices, the Government of Togo (GOT) reduced retail gasoline prices by 13% on March 19. However, this is still higher than prices in neighboring countries. The GOT declared an increase of the Guaranteed Minimum Wage of 13,757 francs per month (about USD 26) to 28,000 francs (about USD 56), but it is not clear when this will be effective. There are no plans to control the price of basic commodities.

¶4. Presidential Election: Presidential elections are due to be held in early 2010, although no exact date has yet been announced. The 2005 elections were marred by considerable violence and the fear of this occurring again may provide the impetus for more Togolese to seek immigration. Currently, the GOT and political parties are discussing how to update the electoral code.

¶5. Natural Disaster Damages: There remains significant damage to Togo's infrastructure as a result of last years' heavy flooding. Although the international donor community has provided funding for road construction and other general sanitation projects, the perception by the population is that little has been done. This year's rainy season began in April and there will undoubtedly be more flooding and damage.

¶6. NIV FRAUD: Over the last six months, NIV fraud investigations represented 28% of FPU's total investigation workload. Most applicants intend to study or conduct some form of business in the U.S. However, post is seeing more and more K-1 visa applications. This is significant for FPU, as the detection of fraud perpetrated by K-1 visa applicants in Togo is difficult to prove. These applicants do not have a long history of a relationship to substantiate and field investigations reveal little new information because the petitioner and beneficiary have never lived together.

¶7. Bank Document Fraud: The number of fraudulent bank documents presented decreased in the past six months. We assume that it is because of the past arrests of those presenting the documents. Four applicants were arrested for presenting fraudulent bank account statements in this time period. They submitted forged documents printed with the letterhead of a new local bank in Togo. Fortunately, the managers of this bank were very eager to press charges against the fraudsters and helped authorities prosecute the criminals. The criminal prosecution is still underway and the individuals are currently incarcerated.

¶8. High School Diplomas with International Schools: Post has received a number of international high school diplomas whose

holders say they intend to pursue higher education in the United States. In particular, Post received many applications from one school that has a history of accepting students who have dropped out of the Togolese public education system. The Fraud Prevention Unit discussed the matter with the National Committee for Certification and Equivalence of Diplomas. The Office confirmed that the school does not meet the equivalency of the International Baccalaureate diploma nor the Togolese Baccalaureate. The school's director also told consular staff that they have not been accredited by GOT (for almost 20 years), though the school has now received temporary accreditation.

¶9. Pastors and Conferences: Post has seen a rise in the number of pastors presenting odd invitation letters for conferences in the U.S. In general these letters have many typos and have very basic grammatical errors. One such group of letters were for different pastors to attend different conferences on different dates, but used the same letterhead.

¶10. G visa Fraud: A woman pretended to be a secretary and applied for a G1 visa. She submitted a genuine letter from the Congolese mission in New York, a genuine contract written by the mission, and a fake work attestation forged in Lome by her sister who is the manager of a well-known security company in Togo. Post determined the applicant was ineligible for the G1 visa under 6(C) after an Advisory Opinion from CA.

¶11. IV FRAUD (Non-DV): Most IV cases seen at post are CR/IR and V92 follow-to-join applications. During the past six months, 28% of FPUs workload was IV investigation requests. This is a significant rise from 8% in the last semester.

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¶12. Previous DV Marriage Fraud vs. Current IV Genuine Marriage: In about 90% of all IV cases, petitioners were DV winners who left with a wife 5 or 6 years ago, divorced upon entry in the US, then returned to Togo to marry another woman. In most cases, the first marriage was contracted solely for immigration purposes and was not detected during interviews because post did not have a Fraud Prevention Unit at that time. Post then based its decisions on the presentation of a valid marriage certificate. In one specific case, the husband divorced upon entering the US and ordered that his subsequent marriage be officiated by proxy in Togo. During a relationship interview, the wife confessed that her husband was not there and a family member forged his signature on the official marriage certificate. The case was sent back to NVC for revocation. In total there were 23 revocations during this period.

¶13. DIVERSITY VISA FRAUD: Diversity Visa investigations represented 44% of FPU workload over the last six months, with a variety of fraud types. In the course of this semester, 50% of FPU overall verifications were related to high school diplomas, most of which are submitted by DV applicants. Officers refer all such diplomas to the Fraud Prevention Unit for systematic verifications. There is no major fraud concern at the moment, probably because all applicants know their diplomas will be verified. However, Togolese officials are very slow in responding to post's requests for verifications. Some DV applicants attempt to qualify on the basis of education by bringing technical diplomas or degrees earned abroad in a different education system, for which consular staff cannot determine the equivalency in the Togolese system. Post systematically refers such applicants to the National Committee for Certification and Equivalence of Diplomas. No diploma has been confirmed fake during this period.

¶14. Employment Verifications: Post continues to use O'Net Online classifications to determine whether an applicants' expertise meets the right job zone. However, very few employment verifications occurred this semester as the majority of applicants hold valid high school diplomas.

¶15. Relationship Fraud: There was a substantial decrease in the number of married DV applicants. Most applicants are single and qualified on the basis of education.

¶16. ACS AND PASSPORT FRAUD: Post has not experienced any ACS fraud this semester. A total of five passports were declared lost/stolen (four "Lost" and one "Stolen"). This information was entered into the ACS application and replacement passports were issued.

¶17. ADOPTION FRAUD: After a one year suspension, the GOT resumed adoptions with detailed regulations. A National Committee for Adoptions (NCA) was officially established in accordance with the requirements of the Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoptions. The Consular staff met with the President of the NCA and the information is currently being updated for CA and the website.

¶18. DNA TESTING: DNA testing continues to be recommended in IV and V92 follow-to-join cases when a child is involved, and when the beneficiary has limited knowledge of the petitioner. The percentage of negative results decreased significantly this semester from 11% to 5%. In total 77 DNA tests were recommended over the last six months and only 4 results came back negative.

¶19. ASYLUM AND OTHER DHS BENEFITS FRAUD: Since the beginning of the current fiscal year, there have been fewer asylum related investigations. Post verified few political party cards and is currently verifying civil documents. In one case the birth certificate was confirmed fraudulent by the vital statistics bureau. The marriage certificate and ID card are still pending verification. Already, FPU discovered that the handwriting is the same on both the birth certificate and the marriage certificate. The birth certificate was supposedly issued in 1967 and the marriage certificate was issued in 1991. However, the freshness of the ink on both documents shows that they were likely forged at the same time. The investigation is pending. Also during the last 6 months, post completed an evaluation survey for DHS.

¶20. ALIEN SMUGGLING, TRAFFICKING, ORGANIZED CRIME, TERRORIST TRAVEL: GOT law enforcement authorities continue working closely with CA and RSO on visa cases requiring in-depth field investigations. Currently there are no significant cases to report.

¶21. DS CRIMINAL FRAUD INVESTIGATIONS: The RSO continues to work closely with CA and GOT law enforcement authorities on fraud investigations. Post was able to coordinate the arrest of 4 bank document fraud perpetrators. The fraudsters are currently deferred to prison, awaiting judgment.

¶22. HOST COUNTRY PASSPORT, IDENTITY DOCUMENTS AND CIVIL REGISTRY: Document fraud continues to be rampant at Post, and we

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frequently encounter irregularities in the issuance of civil documents, especially at the Vital Statistics Bureaus. Often documents are not valid because the law and procedures are not followed by civil servants. Many Togolese citizens lack information about how and where to get the right information. In addition, the belief that one always needs an intermediary to help drives unsuspecting people into fraud rings. Over the last six months, post encountered a number of documents signed by the wrong people, legal documents naively altered by civil servants to make corrections, and civil servants allowing marriage by proxy, which is prohibited by the law.

¶23. COOPERATION WITH HOST GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES: Post continues to work closely with the host Government on issues pertaining to visa fraud. Due to the many irregularities encountered with vital statistics bureaus, post will be organizing an information sharing meeting with mayors, archives and office managers, immigration officers, airline staff and other missions, to prevent fraud. We hope to share the information on the importance of fighting fraud and strategizing together for a common purpose.

¶24. AREAS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN: Post is developing strategies to determine the validity of marriages or fiance relationships without having to go on lengthy site visits.

¶25. STAFFING AND TRAINING: During this reporting period, the

management of the Consular Office changed with the October/November arrival of a new Consul, Anthony W. Alexander, and Vice-Consul, Marie M. Blanchard who also serves part time as Fraud Prevention Manager. The Consul will depart post in November 2009 and be replaced by Mary E. Earl. The senior FSN, who had been on extended medical leave, resumed work on January 20, 2009. During this period, however, Post lost a senior FSN and the Consular OMS was promoted to fill the vacancy. Since January, the Consular section has been in the process of hiring a new OMS. A candidate has been selected and will commence employment on June 8 at which time the section will be staffed with two Officers and four FSNs. In addition, the section will be fully staffed once the newly hired EFM's clearances are completed. The experience of the last six months highlighted the importance of cross-training for the Fraud Investigator so that she will be able to stand in for any position when there is a need and to better understand visa processing, which in turn helps fraud detection. The section hosted the visit of the Regional Consular Officer from March 9 - 12. In addition, the section was involved in the visit of a multi-agency team that was looking at Togo's judicial system, money laundering, and narcotic trafficking, all issues of importance to the Consular Section.

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